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CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

AMENDMENTS PROPOSED BY THE COMMITTEE TO DEFINE THE CONDITIONS FOR ASSOCIATE AND ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP IN THE SOCIETY OF THE SIGMA XI

At the Cleveland convention a committee was appointed charged with the formulation of amendments to the constitution of the Sigma Xi defining the qualifications for associate and active membership. Unfortunately, the third member, representing the engineering profession, was unable to serve on the committee, because of the stress of other duties. The two other members, Professor Nichols and the undersigned, were absent in Europe continuously from the latter part of February till near the first of October, and it was found impossible to submit the proposed amendments for the action of the council and the chapters, as directed by the convention, in time for legal action by the next convention.

The subject, however, is one of such grave importance to the Society that it is better there should be a thorough discussion before its submission to the convention for final approval or rejection. The proposed amendments, as formulated by the committee, and as recommended by others, are therefore given here in the hope that they will receive at the Atlanta convention the earnest attention of the delegates. If approved they will have all the force of actual amendments to the constitution, and may be formally ratified later.

The committee has been greatly indebted to various members of the Society for helpful suggestions, and especially to Professors Edmunds and Huber of the Michigan chapter, and Dean Orton of the Ohio chapter. As the suggestions by Dean Orton were received too late for submission to Professor Nichols they have been inserted separately. Dean Orton called a committee, composed of Professors Bownocker, Vivian, Dye, Morrow, Prosser, and Barrows, for the discussion of the amendments submitted to him, and the suggestions they offer the writer believes to be distinct improvements. The changes from the present form proposed by the committee are given in italics.

ARTICLE III

SECTION 1. The Society shall consist of *associate*, active, alumni, and honorary members.

SECTION 2. (a) *The associate membership of the chapter at any institution shall be composed of such students as may be elected by the chapter or admitted from other chapters; associate members shall have all the privileges of active members when present at any meeting, except the right of suffrage.* The active membership of the chapter at any institution shall be composed of such resident professors, instructors, and *students* as are members of the Society. The alumni members of the chapter shall consist of former active members no longer connected with the institution, and such graduates as may be admitted to membership under the provision of Section 5; they shall have all the privileges of active members when present at any meeting, except that they shall not vote at the election of new members. *Associate or active members of any chapter who may become connected with another institution at which there is a chapter shall be entitled to enrollment as associate or active members in the latter on presenting satisfactory credentials.*

(b) Membership of alumni chapters shall be composed of alumni members of collegiate chapters, and such graduates of other institutions of learning at which there are no chapters of the Society, as may be elected to membership in the Society by Alumni chapters.

SECTION 3. Honorary members shall be scientific workers who have achieved eminence in some branch of pure or applied science. They shall be entitled to all the benefits of the Society, including the right to attend and take part in conventions and meetings, but not the right of suffrage.

Section 4. *The following and no others are eligible to associate membership in a chapter at any institution: any graduate student or any undergraduate student of the third or fourth year who has given promise of marked ability or shown marked excellence in those departments of science which it is the object of the society to promote.*

The following and no others are eligible to active membership in a chapter at any institution: (a) any professor or instructor of the institution who has shown noteworthy achievement as an original investigator in some branch of pure or applied science; (b) as a non-resident member, any professor, instructor or investigator connected with a neighboring educational, scientific or professional institution not having a chapter who otherwise would be eligible for active membership; (c) any resident graduate or undergraduate, who has given evidence of an aptitude for scientific investigation. *Such evidence shall consist of either the publication of original investigations of merit; or the actual performance of meritorious research work, when vouched for by two or more active members of the society. In professional or technical institutions marked evidence of originality in constructive work or in the solution of intricate problems, when associated with general excellence in scientific studies shall be construed as*

fulfilling the requirements of this section, when vouched for by two or more active members.

Section 5. Any graduate of the institution, or of other institutions at which there is no chapter of the society, is eligible to membership on the same conditions as prescribed for professors and instructors in (a) of section 4.

S. W. WILLISTON,
E. L. NICHOLS,
Committee.

AMENDMENTS PROPOSED BY DEAN ORTON AND THE OHIO COMMITTEE

Section 4 (second sentence) To add: Such promise shall be regarded as sufficiently met if one or more active members make written statements vouching for the ability of the student to do independent thinking, and the scholastic record of the student is of high quality. A record of high quality alone, without testimony of the power of independent thought, shall not be considered as sufficient weight. Such promise may also be regarded as sufficiently met if three or more active members in unrelated departments make written statements vouching for the student's originality, intellectual power, and success in the problems thus far attacked, even if the scholastic record of the student is not a high one.

Section 4 (last sentence.) To add: In case of students pursuing professional or technical courses, evidence of originality in the solution of intricate problems, and power to do constructive work with experimental data, vouched for by two or more active members of the chapter, should be construed as fulfilling the requirements of active membership.

REPORT TO THE ILLINOIS CHAPTER ON THE MINNESOTA AMENDMENTS

Your committee appointed to consider the amendments to the Constitution of the General Society offered by the University of Minnesota* begs leave to report as follows:

We have attempted to consider the general tenor rather than the precise phraseology of these items in order that our delegates may be able to support a general policy rather than merely be tied up to a form of wording.

The first proposed amendment reads as follows:

Article II. Section 3.

"The chairman shall submit copies of the petition and all available information to the members of the council for consideration and consul-

*See QUARTERLY, No. I, p. II.

tation with the members of their chapters. It shall be the duty of each councilor to advise the chairman by letter as soon as practicable as to his attitude and that of his chapter regarding the petition. The chairman shall submit the results of this consultation to each councilor in detail for his information and further consideration. After full opportunity for further inquiry, the chairman shall submit the question of granting the petition to letter ballot of the councilors whose vote shall be final. Each chapter may make such rules as it may determine upon regarding its instructions to its councilor in the matter of his voting upon petitions for charters."

"When the chairman has received the written consent of three fourths of the members of council to the granting of the petition, he shall notify the president that the petition has been granted."

The first amendment is a radical change from the present policy of the Society in granting a new chapter. As the matter now stands a petition for a new chapter is discussed in the Council and the advisability of presenting the petition to the general Society is passed upon before the matter is made public in any way. If the Council is agreed that it is desirable to grant the charter, the subject is then laid before the chapters openly and on the vote of the chapters depends the action with regard to the establishment of the new chapter.

In the new scheme it is the duty of members of the Council to provide for an immediate discussion of the matter in their respective chapters. The result of this discussion will then be transmitted to the Council and the final vote of the councilors determines the question.

Is it not wise that no petition should pass beyond the knowledge of the Council until it appears that the best interests of the Society will be served by admitting the proposed chapter? After this conclusion has been reached, it is evidently legitimate for the members of the Council to throw the responsibility openly upon the chapters and let them discuss as fully as desired the ratification of the Council action; but, before the question has reached the point where the Council is clear in any case, open discussion is adverse to the best interests of the Society and of the applicant alike. In many of our faculties are to be found strong men who are graduates of weak institutions. In any public discussion involving their Alma Mater or an institution closely affiliated with it they are bound to be influenced to take a favorable attitude. On the other hand, a careful personal discussion of the general principles involved has often resulted in the past in the expression of doubt as to the wisdom of the proposed move.

Your committee finds that it cannot recommend the new scheme for the following reasons:

First, the publicity achieved would be unfortunate both for the applicant and for the Society. It would tend to align members in accordance with personal affiliations and would prevent the discussion of the question from the standpoint of general policy. It seems to us an admirable provision in our present constitution that the matter should be carefully considered in executive session of the Council before it is in any way brought to the attention of the general Society, and we are inclined to feel that the investigation of the Council should be so thorough and its recommendations so clear as to command the prompt and cordial support of the chapters and that no petition should be brought into public notice until its ultimate acceptance is practically assured.

Second, we are confident that the method proposed will increase the amount of executive work and thus add to the burden of conducting the Society. The proposed plan will also make the business of granting a charter even slower than the present dilatory plan; it is therefore objectionable because of taking more time.

Third, we are inclined to think that the method proposed will ultimately make a councilor only the mouthpiece of his chapter and limit his power of exercising individual judgment. We cannot believe that this is a desirable tendency.

Many are of the opinion that the instructed delegate cannot serve the best interests of the Society as a whole. At various conventions certain delegates have stated publicly in explanation of a vote that after listening to the discussion they were personally convinced of the wisdom of the plan proposed, but that they had been positively instructed by their chapters to oppose the measure and although they felt that the chapters might modify their instructions if the matter had been laid before them as it was now presented, yet they had no right to depart from the instructions given.

The second proposed amendment reads thus:

"Section 4. Councilors not reporting their votes within a period of six (6) months from the time of any question is submitted to them, shall be again requested to vote, and on failure to do so within ten days, shall be regarded as having voted in the affirmative."

"Section 5. A charter for the establishment of a new chapter shall be issued as soon as the president has received notification of the consent of the requisite number of councilors."

Note that the proposed method plans to register all votes which may be delayed as affirmative votes on the question at issue. Your

committee believes that members or chapters who may be in doubt regarding the wisdom of a particular movement should not be compelled *nolens volens* to vote in the affirmative because they hesitate to register a positive vote in the negative. On the question of granting a charter for a new chapter there are three clearly differentiated positions; first, approval; second, rejection; and third, reasonable doubt as to the wisdom of the course at the present moment. In our opinion either members or chapters should be permitted to express the third position by withholding a positive vote on the question or by registering a vote in favor of postponement for the present time. To register the latter would require a change in our constitution unless this construction be placed upon votes that are not formally and promptly recorded on one side or the other of the question.

The next proposed amendment reads as follows:

Article VIII. Section I.

"A regular convention of the Society consisting of one delegate from each chapter shall be held once each two years during the summer vacation at a time and place fixed upon the council."

The amendment to Article VIII regarding conventions of the Society aims to provide for holding a convention at some time distinct from other meetings so as to give opportunity for devoting undivided attention to the business of the organization. With this the committee is in full approval. It would suggest the omission from the form published of the words "during the summer vacation." The widest latitude should be given to the Council to fix the time and place, making such changes from year to year as proves most desirable. To include the words indicated above is equivalent to limiting rather narrowly the powers of the Council in this matter.

The article on conventions does away with the privilege of holding special conventions. While none have ever yet been held, the privilege may be an important one for an emergency and should be retained.